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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7136  
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1612  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4511  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1156  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2048  
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3560  
RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA 0115  
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0459  
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 003224

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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, DRL/PHD, EAP/ANP  
NSC FOR EPHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/21/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [ASEC](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: NORTH MALUKU -- JAKARTA INTERVENES TO RESOLVE  
CONTROVERSIAL LOCAL ELECTION

REF: A. JAKARTA 3121  
[1](#)B. JAKARTA 3089  
[1](#)C. JAKARTA 2843

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (U) This message was coordinated with Consulate Surabaya.

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY: The National Electoral Commission (KPU) has overturned the result of the gubernatorial election in North Maluku province in eastern Indonesia and suspended three members of the local electoral body (KPUD). The local body had earlier ruled in favor of the incumbent governor in the November 3 election. Controversial decisions in the electoral arena both before and after the election have sparked ethnic tensions, and brought hundreds of protesters to the streets in both North Maluku and Jakarta. KPU expects to announce the final result by late November. END SUMMARY.

JAKARTA STEPS IN

[1](#)3. (SBU) Unlike the vast majority of direct gubernatorial elections that have been conducted successfully since 2005 across Indonesia's 33 provinces, the November 3 election in North Maluku in eastern Indonesia has been mired in confusion and controversy. On November 19, the newly-installed KPU, responsible for overseeing the country's second direct presidential election in 2009, intervened to overturn a highly suspect result in favor of the incumbent governor, Thaib Armayin.

[1](#)4. (C) Thaib is backed by President Yudhoyono's Democratic Party and the Islamist Prosperous Justice Party. KPUD on November 18 had declared Thaib the winner by less than a thousand votes of a total 620,000 ballots cast. KPU justified its late-stage intervention by noting procedural irregularities and alternative vote tabulations from three sub-districts in West Halmahera, North Maluku. The second set of data could hand victory to the Golkar party candidate, Abdul Gafur, a former minister under then president Suharto.

15. (C) The election has been spoiled by allegations of favoritism and incompetence against the local body, KPUD (Ref A). Head of the local election oversight committee, Thalib Hasan, told poloff that he had recommended that the national electoral body replace the members of KPUD before the election even took place. The now suspended head of KPUD is alleged to have aligned himself with the incumbent because they are both members of the dominant Makian ethnic group.

#### TURBULENCE

16. (C) The election controversy has sparked large street protests in Ternate, the provincial capital, and in Jakarta, by supporters of Thaib and Gafur. Supporters of two other candidates that are out of the running have also gotten into the act. Police last week intervened to prevent supporters of Thaib and the opposing candidates from squaring off outside the KPUD office building in Ternate, where the KPUD head--who was assaulted during the campaign period (Ref B)--had taken refuge on the second floor.

17. (C) The political squabble has redivided the province along ethnic lines. Communal conflict between the Makian (who account for about 30 percent of the population) and other minority ethnic groups left thousands dead between 1999-2001. Police and military in the province are working to prevent any relapse into communal violence. The Makian are resented by other ethnic groups for their domination of the provincial economy and bureaucracy. Thaib is also faulted for failing to relocate the capital from Ternate--where the Makian are entrenched--to central Halmahera, as mandated by the law establishing North Maluku as a province.

#### EARLY TRIAL FOR ELECTORAL BODY

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18. (C) For the KPU, North Maluku presents a significant challenge. The new KPU commissioners are not highly regarded (Ref C). One of the commissioners has yet to be installed by parliament due to an ongoing corruption investigation. Although late in coming, the intervention appears well-justified, however. Order has been temporarily restored to the streets in Ternate. Muhammad Ridha, a law professor and the director of a local NGO, told poloff that KPU's final verdict is more likely to be accepted because it is not seen as partisan, like the KPUD. According to Ridha, a victory for Thaib could potentially spark violent unrest. A victory for Gafur--who has pledged to bring more ethnic groups into government--is probably the best result for stability.

#### HEFFERN